

Wildlife Interpretations

Soils affect the kind and amount of vegetation that is available to wildlife as food and cover. They also affect the construction of water impoundments. If food, cover, or water is missing, inadequate, or inaccessible, wildlife will be scarce or will not inhabit the area. If the soils have potential for habitat development, wildlife habitat can be created or improved by planting appropriate vegetation, properly managing the existing plant cover, and fostering the natural establishment of desirable plants.

This information can be used in planning parks, wildlife refuges, nature study areas, and other developments for wildlife; in selecting soils that are suitable for establishing, improving, or maintaining specific elements of wildlife habitat; and in determining the intensity of management needed for each element of the habitat.

To obtain a **wildlife habitat** report, click on the link located in this subsection.

Wildlife Habitat

In this report, the soils in the survey area are rated according to their potential for providing habitat for various kinds of wildlife. The potential of the soil is rated **good**, **fair**, **poor**, or **very poor**. A rating of **good** indicates that the element or kind of habitat is easily established, improved, or maintained. Few or no limitations affect management, and satisfactory results can be expected. A rating of **fair** indicates that the element or kind of habitat can be established, improved, or maintained in most places. Moderately intensive management is required for satisfactory results. A rating of **poor** indicates that limitations are severe for the designated element or kind of habitat. Habitat can be created, improved, or maintained in most places, but management is difficult and must be intensive. A rating of **very poor** indicates that restrictions for the element or kind of habitat are very severe and that unsatisfactory results can be expected. Creating, improving, or maintaining habitat is impractical or impossible. The elements of wildlife habitat are described in the following paragraphs.

Grain and seed crops are domestic grains and seed-producing herbaceous plants used by wildlife. Examples are corn, soybeans, wheat, oats, and barley.

Grasses and legumes are domestic perennial grasses and herbaceous legumes planted for wildlife food and cover. Examples are brome grass, timothy, orchard grass, clover, alfalfa, wheat grass, and birdsfoot trefoil.

Wild herbaceous plants are native or naturally established grasses and forbs, including weeds, that provide food and cover for wildlife. Examples are bluestems, indiagrass, blueberry, goldenrod, lambsquarters, dandelions, blackberry, ragweed, wheatgrass, and nightshade. The major soil properties affecting the growth of grain and forage crops and wild herbaceous plants are depth of the root zone, texture of the surface layer, the amount

of water available to plants, wetness, salinity, and flooding. The length of the growing season also is important.

Hardwood trees and woody understory produce nuts or other fruit, buds, catkins, twigs, bark, and foliage that wildlife eat. Examples are oak, poplar, box elder, birch, maple, green ash, willow, and American elm.

Shrubs are bushy woody plants that produce fruit, buds, twigs, bark, and foliage. Examples of fruit-producing shrubs that are suitable for planting on soils that have good potential for these plants are hawthorn, honeysuckle, American plum, redosier dogwood, chokecherry, highbush cranberry, elderberry, gooseberry, serviceberry, silver buffaloberry, and crabapple.

Coniferous plants are cone-bearing trees, shrubs, or ground cover that provide habitat or supply food in the form of browse, seed, or fruit-like cones. Examples are pine, spruce, cedar, and tamarack. The major soil properties affecting the growth of hardwood and coniferous trees and shrubs are depth of root zone, the amount of water available to plants, and wetness.

Wetland plants are annual and perennial wild herbaceous plants that grow on moist or wet sites. Submerged or floating aquatic plants are excluded. Wetland plants produce food or cover for wetland wildlife. Examples of these plants are smartweeds, wild millet, rushes, sedges, bulrushes, wild rice, arrowhead, waterplantain, cattail, prairie cordgrass, bluejoint grass, asters, and beggarticks. The major soil properties affecting wetland plants are texture of the surface layer, wetness, acidity or alkalinity, and slope.

Shallow water areas have an average depth of less than 5 feet. They are useful as habitat for some wildlife species. They are naturally wet areas or are created by dams, levees, or water-control measures in marshes or streams. Examples are waterfowl feeding areas, wildlife watering developments, beaver ponds, and other wildlife ponds. The major soil properties affecting shallow water areas are depth to bedrock, wetness, surface stoniness, slope, and permeability.

The habitat for various kinds of wildlife is described in the following paragraphs.

Habitat for openland wildlife consists of cropland, pasture, meadows, and areas that are overgrown with grasses, herbs, and shrubs. These areas produce grain and seed crops, grasses and legumes, and wild herbaceous plants. The wildlife attracted to these areas include Hungarian partridge, ring-necked pheasant, bobwhite quail, sharp-tailed grouse, meadowlark, field sparrow, killdeer, cottontail rabbit, and red fox.

Habitat for woodland wildlife consists of areas of hardwoods or conifers or a mixture of these and associated grasses, legumes, and wild herbaceous plants. The wildlife attracted to this habitat include wild turkey, ruffed grouse, thrushes, woodpeckers, owls, tree squirrels, porcupine, raccoon, white-tailed deer, black bear, and moose.

*Habitat for **wetland wildlife*** consists of open, marshy or swampy shallow water areas, bogs, or flood plains that support water-tolerant plants. The wildlife attracted to this habitat include ducks, geese, herons, bitterns, rails, kingfishers, muskrat, otter, mink, and beaver.

*Habitat for **rangeland wildlife*** consists of areas of shrubs and wild herbaceous plants. The wildlife attracted to rangeland includes coyote, sharp-tailed grouse, greater prairie chicken, meadowlark, gopher, and lark bunting.